United Nations A/AC.109/2000/18

General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 June 2000

Original: English

Special Committee on the situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

British Virgin Islands

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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I. General

1. The Territory of the British Virgin Islands[1] comprises a group of 50 islands, cays and rocks, of which 20 are inhabited. The capital city, Road Town is located on the largest island Tortola, which covers some 21.5 square miles (miles[2]) and has some 80 per cent of the population living there. The other major islands are Virgin Gorda (8.5 miles[2]), Anegada (15.2 miles[2]) and Jost Van Dyke (3.2 miles[2]); the rest constitute the remaining 10.9 miles[2], to make a total land area of 59.3 miles[2].

2. The islands are located in the Leeward Islands, about 60 miles east of Puerto Rico and 15 miles from the United States Virgin Islands. They straddle latitude 18 degrees, 25 minutes North and Longitude 64 degrees, 30 minutes West, and form an archipelago with the United States Virgin Islands, with which they maintain close links. All the islands are volcanic and hilly, with the exception of Anegada, which is flat. The highest point, Sage Mountain on Tortola, rises 17,890 feet.

3. The islands lie within the Trade Wind belt and have a pleasant and healthy subtropical climate.[2] They are subject to occasional hurricanes between August and October and suffer from light earthquakes. The water supply is almost completely dependent on rainfall as there are no rivers.

A. Population

4. In 1996, the estimated size of the population was 18,737, having increased by 2,631 during the previous five years. In 1997, the population grew to 19,107. The current growth rate is estimated at 2.3 per cent per annum. Predominantly of African descent, the population includes those of European, American and Asian extraction. The main religion is Christianity. English is the only language in general use.

5. Between 1992 and 1996, immigration accounted for 55.2 per cent of the population growth. The 1991 census showed that 61.6 per cent of the working labour force were immigrants (most of whom come from neighbouring islands of Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent and other Caribbean islands). Several thousand British Virgin Islanders live outside the territory mostly in the United States Virgin Islands and the mainland of the United States. In addition, almost 80 per cent of all nuclear family households include at least one immigrant, and 63.3 per cent of all single households are headed by immigrants.[2 3] Adult literacy is estimated at 95 per cent.

B. Historical background

6. The earliest inhabitants of the British Virgin Islands were the Arawaks and the Caribs. The islands were sighted in 1492 by Christopher Columbus and were allegedly named *Islands of the Virgins* by him in honour of St. Ursula and her attendants. The Dutch established the first permanent European community on the islands in 1648, although the islands were then little more than a hideout for buccaneers and pirates.

7. In 1666, British planters took control of the islands and the Territory attained the status of a British colony. The planters were granted civil government, constitutional courts, an elected House of Assembly (12 members) and a partly nominated Legislative Council which first met in 1772.

8. The production and sale of sugar, initially secondary to cotton, became the dominant source of revenue, necessitating the large-scale importation of enslaved African men and women to work on the estates. Their descendants became the dominant racial group in the territory and have remained so ever since. The sugar industry declined and collapsed eventually due to a combination of factors, including activism by abolitionists, natural disasters and high taxes. The British planters abandoned the islands and the newly emancipated Africans, supported by the Encumbered Estates Act, were able to purchase most of the remaining estates and form an industrious peasant economy.

9. In 1872, the Islands became part of the Federation of the Leeward Islands. In the 1930s and 1940s, British Virgin Islanders demanded greater self-governance, which led to the Territory becoming a separately administered colony in 1956. A decade later, a new Constitution was formulated with local input. This allowed for a ministerial system of Government, headed by a Chief Minister. The Territory remains a colony of the United Kingdom since 1672.[2]

II. Constitutional and political developments

10. The British Virgin Islands are a United Kingdom Overseas Territory (formerly known as a Dependent Territory; see para. 15 below). Under the 1976 Constitution, the administering Power appoints as its representative a Governor with responsibilities for defence, internal security, external affairs, public service and the administration of the courts; the Governor retains legislative powers as necessary to exercise special responsibilities.

11. The Executive Council advises the Governor on all his executive powers. It is made up of the Chief Minister and not less than two or more than three Ministers appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister. The Governor is not a member himself but presides over its meetings and must consult with it in the exercise of his duties. The Attorney-General is an ex-officio member.

12. The Legislative Council consists of a Speaker, the Attorney General as an ex-officio member, and 13 elected members. The members of the Legislative Council are elected by direct popular vote; one each from the nine electoral districts and, beginning in 1995, four at-large members.[4] The Legislative Council is the legislative body, approves and adopts the budget and considers government policies, administration and other major issues. All legislation adopted must be approved by the Governor to become law.[2]

13. General elections must be held at least once every four years. Candidates are elected based on a simple majority. Persons voting must be 18 years of age or over, be British subjects, and be domiciled in the Territory. The last election was held in 1999.

14. The law of the British Virgin Islands is the common law of England and locally enacted legislation. It is administered by Magistrates Courts and the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (Court of Appeal), which is based in Saint Lucia.[3] Two Resident High Court Judges and a visiting Court of Appeal, comprising the Chief Justice and two Judges of Appeal, sit twice a year in the Islands. In addition to the Magistrates Court, there is a Juvenile Court and a Court of Summary Jurisdiction. The Privy Council of Britain is the final Court of Appeal in prescribed cases.[2]

15. In March 1999, the Government of the United Kingdom issued a White Paper on the relationship between the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories, entitled "Partnership for progress and prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories" (for the text, see A/AC.109/1999/1, annex; for key recommendations, see A/AC.109/1999/9, para. 28). Since then the dependent territories are known as the British Overseas Territories.

III. Economic conditions

A. General

16. The economy remains based on tourism and the provision of financial services. A rich vegetation, unspoilt beaches, yachting marinas and fine coral reefs make the islands a natural tourist destination and the financial services sector has been growing rapidly in recent years.[3]

17. The territorial Government has enacted policies to diversify and strengthen each sector and to enhance the links between them. The Territory graduated from capital aid at the end of the 1995/96 financial year. It has since then been receiving a declining, modest bilateral technical cooperation programme, and will continue to benefit from the United Kingdom's Caribbean Overseas Territories regional development programme. It also continues to receive development aid assistance from the European Union under the Lomé Convention.[3]

18. The Government has developed a national integrated development plan in collaboration with various agencies of the United Nations. It is designed to expand the economic base of the Territory, improve living standards and distribute gains more equitably through a framework of consultation that will determine consensual policies. Some of the broad objectives include expansion of the national output within the framework of sustainable development. The territorial Government is determined to try to lessen dependence for revenue on the financial sector by focusing on the diversification of the economy.

19. The two sectors of tourism and offshore financial services together account for more than 70 per cent of the Government's recurrent revenue annually. During the 1980s, the Territory experienced rapid economic growth, which averaged double digits until the early

1990s, when the rate levelled off to an average of 8.2 per cent.[2]

20. In 1998, the gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 6.8 per cent, compared to a 4.5 per cent increase in 1997. The per capita GDP in 1998 was approximately $24,000, down from $26,903 in 1997.[5]

B. Public finance

21. The 1999 budget (estimate) was $155,311,000, with an (estimated) expenditure of $153,839,885, showing a surplus of only $1,470,115, which is down from the previous year's surplus of some $15 million (1998).[2]

22. Legislators have unanimously approved a budget of $157 million for the year 2000. The Government projects that it will collect $157 million in revenue, representing a projected growth of more that 50 per cent in five years. The recurrent expenditure is estimated at $128,788,500. The financial services sector is to contribute $66,205,000 to the budget during the fiscal year 2000. Contributions to the Capital Fund are expected to total $23,934,085. The Reserves will increase by an estimated $3,277,415 and the Disaster Relief Fund will receive one million dollars.[6]

23. The overall balance on the Consolidated Fund currently exceeds $40 million, and the Government has been able to finance more than 80 per cent of the $150 million capital projects during the last decade.[2]

C. Construction and infrastructure

24. Several capital projects were completed in 1998 and early 1999, including the construction of a dual carriageway in the Road Town area at an estimated cost of $4.8 million and the $4.2 million expansion of the cruise ship pier. Ongoing projects for 1999 include capital improvements to the airports on Beef Island and Virgin Gorda, the construction of a new General Post Office and Customs Office and extensions to both the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College and Peebles Hospital. The residential construction sector remains buoyant.[7]

25. The construction of a new international airport on Beef Island is the largest project ever undertaken by the Government. The scope of the project, which has already begun, includes a new terminal, cargo facilities, civil works and extension of the runway. It is estimated to cost around $53 million, $40 million of which has been raised through loans and grants from the European Development Fund (EDF), the European Development Bank (EDB) the Social Security Board, the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The remaining $13 million comes directly from the Government's annual budget. The EDF grant and the EDB loans are expected to cover the cost of the terminal buildings, while the CDB loan is earmarked for the runway.

26. The Territory's growth has put a strain on the power supply and led to outages. The British Virgin Islands Electricity Corporation (BVIEC) has a generating capacity of 25.8 megawatts (mw) from two power stations, the latest being the Pockwood Pond plant in Tortola, which was financed by CDB and the United Kingdom's Commonwealth Development Corporation. BVIEC is building an extension to the power station and installing two new engines, which are expected to start operation in October 2000, to meet the demand. Waste heat from the power stations is used in a desalination plant, which has a capacity of 1,000 tons per day.[8,9]

27. The Government is addressing the shortage of waste incinerator capacity and examining different incinerator technologies, with the help of an engineering and consulting firm, to determine the best suited for the Territory. A new facility should be ready for operation in 2002.[10]

D. Agriculture, livestock and fisheries

28. The budget of the Department of Agriculture in 1999 was $1,795,000 and is $2,004,200 for the year 2000. The agriculture sector accounts for approximately 4 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Some 800 hectares (ha) are under cultivation and 4,000 ha of pasture are used for stock rearing. The main crops are fruit and vegetables, which are produced mostly for local consumption, although some are exported to the United States Virgin Islands. Sugar cane is grown for the production of rum.

29. The coastal waters are rich in fish, which provide the primary export of the agriculture/fisheries sector. The use of better technology helped to increase the catch to 1.7 million pounds in 1998, with a total market value of $6.6 million. A fisheries credit scheme assists

fishermen in financing the purchase of boats.[11] The budget of the Department of Conservation and Fisheries in 1999 was $865,600 and is $913,000 for 2000. The Islands' fisheries contribute less than 3 per cent annually to the GDP.

30. The principle obstacles to developing the agriculture sector are a shortage of labour, a lack of water and few marketing facilities. The territorial Government reports that it has developed nearly three million gallons of water storage capacity to harvest rainfall and run-off by constructing dams, tanks, catchments, wells and such structures to alleviate the water shortage in many agricultural areas. This has enabled the Government and farmers to undertake land settlement and pursue vegetable and fruit crop production. It has also encouraged livestock farmers to expand their enterprises and achieve a higher farm production.[2]

E. Industrial development

31. Manufacturing accounted for less than 5 per cent of the GDP between 1991 and 1995. The most important manufactured products are rum, tourist items, books and construction materials (mostly aggregates). The light manufacturing industries centre around the arts and crafts market and the production of snack foods.

32. Tax and duty exemptions are offered to promote industry. Under the Pioneer Services and Enterprises Ordinance, for example, investors in enterprises for which a special need exists in the Territory may benefit from a tax holiday of up to 10 years and may import capital needed for their investment without paying duty.

F. International business and finance

33. The financial services sector has been growing rapidly in recent years and now generates half of the total government revenue. The Territory specializes in the registration of international business companies (IBCs) and has a dominant share of about 45 per cent of the global market.[3] By the end of 1999 there were a total of 350,000 IBCs, with some 57,000 new registrations in the year.[8]

34. The territorial Government is trying to diversify within the financial sector, for example by promoting ship registrations, insurance, trusts and mutual fund markets.[12] In December 1997, amendments were made to the 1996 mutual funds act to enhance regulation of mutual funds. According to the territorial Government, the purpose was "to create a fit and proper environment which meets internationally recognized standards of best practice in the management and administration of mutual funds".[13] This has proven to be an important source of revenue for the Territory. Up to the end of September 1999, some 242 entities had been licensed as managers and administrators of mutual funds. Over the same period 1,494 new funds have been either registered or recognized. According to the Chief Minister, this sector has already contributed over one million dollars.[14]

35. International trust management has also become an important activity, and there is an offshore insurance sector, with 145 captive insurance and ten insurance-management companies. Over 1,040 vessels are registered, most of them large yachts, and there are plans to expand this area of activity.[8]

36. The importance of offshore finance to the British Virgin Islands and to the other Overseas Territories was addressed by the administering Power in the above-mentioned White Paper,[3] wherein it is proposed that financial regulatory systems must improve, be updated and be responsive to ever tighter international standards.[15] The United Kingdom is using independent analysts to review the operations of offshore financial centres in its Caribbean dependent territories. The review is jointly commissioned by the United Kingdom Government, through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Governments of Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Montserrat. All banking practices will be reviewed, including legislation covering the offshore insurance industry, the securities sector, companies and trusts, independent regulatory authorities, international cooperation and anti-money-laundering legislation and preventive measures.

37. The British Virgin Islands is a member of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force. In March 1999 the Task Force launched a new $7.2 million anti-money-laundering programme. The programme, funded by the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, will strengthen the institutional capacities of the Caribbean countries to fight financial crime by facilitating prevention, investigation and prosecution.[16]

38. Several British dependent territories have been concerned about recent moves which they claim are aimed at reducing their attraction as jurisdictions for offshore financial services. Several territories have been listed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for "harmful" tax regimes, which do not meet accepted international standards. OECD would like a review of the taxation regimes of jurisdictions that appear to offer an unfair advantage that might be open to international financial crimes.[17] Caribbean jurisdictions hold some 12 per cent of global tax haven deposits, while OECD States, led by Switzerland and Luxembourg, reportedly hold 60 per cent.[14]

39. The Financial Stability Forum is a panel of international financial experts and regulators created in February 1999 at the behest of the Group of Seven Countries (Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States). It was set up to promote enhanced financial market supervision and surveillance to improve global financial stability, following the recent Asian and Russian financial crises. In May 2000, it issued a report rating offshore centres on their scrutiny of financial operations and willingness to work with other supervisory bodies. The British Virgin Islands — along with the Cayman Islands, the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba and the Bahamas, were included in a list of "category three" — the least-favourable — centres. These Caribbean centres will re-evaluate this matter and examine all countries to see if they are properly classified.[18]

G. Tourism

40. A rich vegetation, unspoilt beaches, yachting marinas and fine coral reefs make the islands a natural tourist destination. Tourism is the main contributor to GDP, providing approximately 45 per cent, and a major source of employment.

41. The territorial Government actively promotes programmes for tourism. Previously, a key part of the Government's tourism strategy was to maintain the island's upscale image. To that end, the Government had placed restrictions on the number of cruise ships allowed in port and the number of passengers allowed on shore, had regulated the development of high-rise hotels and casinos and had promoted the development of niche market sectors, such as inns and villas. However, growth in the cruise ship business prompted the Government to expand its cruise ship facilities in 1998.

42. A healthy 1999 tourist season has supported economic growth in territory. According to the recently released economic indicators for the first quarter of 1999, there was a 54 per cent increase in cruise ship visitors, and 71,261 cruise ships visited the islands compared to 46,310 in 1998. Over the same period, overnight guests increased 8.3 per cent, the number of tourist nights grew 10.5 per cent and general tourist receipts increased 11.6 per cent.[19]

IV. Social conditions

43. The Social Security Board is a statutory body which provides for sickness benefits, maternity benefits, employment injuries, funeral grants and long-term benefits. It ensures timely payments to claimants. During 1999, $2,926,431 was paid out in benefits.

A. Labour and immigration

44. The labour force is engaged primarily in tourism (26 per cent), Government (20 per cent) and construction (18 per cent). There is virtually no unemployment. The Government has introduced into the Legislative Council the Labour Code Act of 1998. Employment conditions, labour relations, and requirements for work permits are governed by the Labour Code Ordinance, 1975. Some 27 International Labour conventions apply to the Territory.[2]

45. In May 2000, the authorities in the Territory detained 63 illegal immigrants, from China, Haiti and Santo Domingo. In the past three years, 500 illegal aliens have been apprehended. Immigration officials try to determine their last port of legal embarkation so as to deport them there. According to press reports, the Territory is also becoming a smuggling stopover for immigrants trying to enter the United States territory, and smugglers drop them off there to avoid apprehension by the United States Coast Guard patrols.[20]

B. Basic human rights

46. As a British Overseas Territory, the Islands are subject to the human rights conventions signed by the

Government of the United Kingdom and extended to the Territory. These include the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. The territorial Government has established a committee to study its compliance with United Nations human rights treaties.

47. Recently, the Convention against All Forms of Discrimination against Women was the focus of a regional convention held in the Territory late in February 2000. The Governor stated that the British Virgin Islands would work together with the United Nations to address the issue of women and poverty, noting that some 1,250 households were headed by single women and single mothers earned less than $500 per month. A study conducted three years ago also showed that one in four women suffered from domestic violence in the Islands.[21]

C. Public health

48. The territorial Government is the major provider and financier of health services. Health services are financed mainly from the Consolidated Fund. For the last five years, the actual recurrent expenditure on health as well as the per capita recurrent health expenditure has continued to increase. The ratio of health expenditure to GDP fluctuated between 1.31 per cent in 1990 and 1.23 per cent in 1996. Community health programmes continue to make progress in the promotion of health and longevity. Immunization for pre-schoolers and school-leavers is actively pursued, and emphasis is placed on school and domiciliary services. Health services focus largely on preventive and promotive health.

49. Primary health care in the Territory is provided by one hospital (Peebles Hospital), one health centre in Road Town and a network of eight district clinics, as well as two satellite clinics in Brewers Bay and Sea Cow Bay. Private health care is provided by one private hospital, two private dental surgeries, two private medical complexes and nine private physicians. Bougainvillea Hospital offers mainly reconstructive surgery.[2] Improvements to medical facilities on other islands in 1999 include the renovation of the North Sound clinic on Virgin Gorda and the opening of a new clinic on Anegada.

50. There is a shortage of skilled health personnel, and skilled personnel are recruited mainly from other Caribbean countries. The Government provides training, grants and scholarships to encourage employment in the health sector.[2]

D. Crime and crime prevention

51. The Royal Virgin Islands Police Force maintains three stations on Tortola and one each on Virgin Gorda, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke. The total size of the force is 156 officers. The level of violent crime is among the lowest in the region, although domestic violence reportedly remains a concern. According to the press, combating domestic violence will be a priority of the police department.[22] In order to combat problems associated with drug trafficking, the Government of the United Kingdom has provided expatriate police personnel, a police launch, a surveillance aircraft and other anti-narcotics equipment. Two Royal Navy personnel and two Royal Air Force crew members are funded by the Government of the United Kingdom. Drug trafficking is on the rise throughout the Caribbean, and in 1998 police seized 156 pounds of cocaine in the Territory.

52. Press reports in April 2000 (*CANA News*) have drawn attention to the Governor's statement calling on the people to support the administration efforts in dealing with the growing crime problem, noting that 14 armed robberies were reported during the last six months and a second murder was reported in the Territory.

E. Educational conditions

53. There are 18 public and 11 private primary schools on Tortola, Anegada, Virgin Gorda and Jost Van Dyke. There are three high schools (one private and two public) and a community college at Road Town. Secondary education is available to the General

Certificate of Education "A" Level. Higher education is provided by the University of the West Indies, while the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College offers associate degree courses and technical education.

V. Participation in regional organizations

54. The Territory enjoys associate membership in the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The Territory is an associate member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), whose goal is to promote closer political and economic integration among Caribbean States, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Because of its relatively high level of economic development, it is being pressured to become a full member, to open its labour market to OECS workers.[23] It is a borrowing member of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). It is also a signatory to the Lomé Convention, which provides for some development assistance. The current convention, Lome IV, runs until February 2000, after which the existing trade arrangements may be revised.

VI. Future political status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

55. According to information received from the administering Power, on 9 September 1998, the Government of the British Virgin Islands and the Government of the United Kingdom signed a "Memorandum of Cooperation and Partnership". In that document, the territorial Government stated its objective to be the achievement of economic independence; the administering Power stated that it shared that objective and that it remained committed to a policy of assisting its Overseas Territories to full independence when and if it was the clearly and constitutionally expressed wish of the people.

B. Position of the administering Power

56. In the statement to the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly on 6 October 1999 (A/C.4/54/SR.5), the representative of the United Kingdom stated that over the past year her Government had made further progress in its efforts to transform its relationship with its Overseas Territories into a fully modern partnership based on the four principles of self-determination, mutual obligations, freedom for the Territories to run their affairs to the greatest degree possible, and a firm commitment from the United Kingdom to help the Territories economically as well as to assist them in emergencies. The United Kingdom was prepared to consider any proposals about their future put forward by the peoples of the Territories themselves.

C. Action by the General Assembly

57. On 6 December 1999, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 54/90 B, section IV of which concerns the British Virgin Islands.

Notes

[1] Information contained in the present working paper has been derived from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations on 1 June 1998 and from published material.

[2] British Virgin Islands, Deputy Governor's submission under Article 73 *e*.

[3] British Overseas Territories White Paper, annex 1.

[4] Commonwealth Secretariat , The Commonwealth On-Line accessed at: www.tcol.co.uk, on 14 July 1997.

[5] Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 12 February 1999, and *The Island Sun*, 10 March 1999.

[6] *BVI Beacon*, 6 January 2000.

[7] 1999 Budget Address, British Virgin Islands Government, web site, www.bvigovernment.org.

[8] EIU views wire, 12 May 2000: country profile.

[9] *The Island Sun*, 5 June 2000.

[10] Ibid., 8 April 2000.

[11] *BVI Beacon*, 1 April 1999.

[12] Caribbean Development Bank, 1997 annual report.

[13] *Bermuda Sun*, 9 December 1997.

[14] *The Island Sun*, 25 December 1999.

[15] *The Financial Times*, 21 February 2000.

[16] *Oxford Analytica*, 29 March 1999.

[17] EIU views wire, 21 September 1999, from *The Financial Times*.

[18] AFP, 26 May 2000, and Reuters, 5 June 2000.

[19] *BVI Beacon*, 6 January 2000.

[20] Data Times/*Newsday*, 4 June 2000, and Reuters, 31 May 2000.

[21] *BVI Beacon*, 2 March 2000 and 13 April 2000.

[22] Ibid., 3 December 1998.

[23] Ibid., 27 April 2000.

United Nations A/AC.109/2000/19

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 June 2000

Original: English

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence of Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from June 1999 to May 2000

Report of the Department of Public Information

I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly, in paragraph 3 of its resolution 54/92 on dissemination of information on decolonization, requested the Department of Public Information "to take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization". The present report covers the activities undertaken by the Department during the period June 1999 to May 2000.

2. The Department's public information activities covered a wide range of issues pertaining to decolonization. The Department continued to cover the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Special Committee). It also continued to promote the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990-2000) and the Pacific Regional Seminar on Non-Self-Governing Territories, through the means available to it as well as through the mass media.

II. Support for public information activities in East Timor

3. During the reporting period, the situation in East Timor and related United Nations activities were widely covered by the news media and were the subject of the majority of the Department's information activities concerning decolonization. (Many of those activities are reviewed elsewhere in this report.) In addition, the Department played an important role in setting up and backstopping the information component of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) in June 1999 and that of the successor mission, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), which was established on 25 October 1999. A review of specific activities undertaken by the Department in cooperation with UNAMET and UNTAET is given below.

4. As a member of the needs assessment team, the Department made recommendations that became the basis of the structure, budget, and functions of the Public Information Office of UNAMET. It further seconded several of its staff to UNAMET to work in media relations and publications and helped identify information and media professionals in radio, television and print productions. The Department continued to provide support to the mission through the

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Task Force on East Timor of the Secretariat. It produced a web site in English on East Timor in cooperation with UNAMET and continued to update the site throughout the mission period. The web site became an important source of information on the activities of UNAMET and publicized the mission's work in progress.

5. As of October 1999, the Department began providing similar planning, budgeting, staffing and backstopping support to UNTAET. It continues to provide overall policy guidance on public information and logistical support to UNTAET through the interdepartmental meetings of the East Timor Task Force at Headquarters.

6. The Department established a web site on UNTAET and continues to update it with inputs from the Office of Communication and Public Information of UNTAET, including press briefing summaries, press releases, documents, regulations adopted by UNTAET, photos and a chronology highlighting the main political developments in East Timor. The business opportunities page of the UNTAET web site provides information on new commercially related legislation as well as business opportunities in East Timor.

7. The Department compiles statistics on UNTAET, including data on troop strength, personnel and budget figures, for use in its background note on peacekeeping operations. The note is distributed both in hard copy and on the Internet.

8. The Department liaised with WGBH Television (PBS) of Boston on communications and logistical questions relating to the donation by WGBH of funds to purchase radio sets for distribution by UNTAET to the people of East Timor.

9. In May 2000, the Department organized a news mission of six journalists who visited East Timor to report on the progress of UNTAET's transitional administration.

10. The Department is cooperating with the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in preparation for the first anniversary of the popular consultation in East Timor, in August 2000. The activities planned include a photo exhibit at Headquarters, a panel discussion, screening of a documentary and dissemination of a booklet to be produced by the Department summarizing the achievements of the United Nations in East Timor.

III. Press and Internet

11. A total of 40 press releases in English and French were issued by the Department on issues relating to decolonization, as part of its regular coverage of United Nations activities. They included press releases relating to the work of the Special Committee on Decolonization and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the General Assembly. All the press releases were made available to the media at United Nations Headquarters, were distributed electronically to the United Nations information centres and services worldwide, and were posted on the United Nations home page.

12. The Secretary-General's statements, including his statement to the Special Committee of 24 and his message for the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, beginning 25 May 2000, were highlighted to the press in press releases distributed by hard copy and on the Internet.

13. The Department issued three press releases relating to the Pacific Regional Seminar on Non-Self-Governing Territories, which was held in Majuro, Marshall Islands, from 16 to 18 May 2000, within the framework of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990-2000). Press releases were issued at United Nations Headquarters and put on the Internet.

14. A separate web page on decolonization was established in English on the United Nations home page, under the "Peace and Security" section in February 2000. Entitled "The United Nations and Decolonization", the page contains information on the history of decolonization, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence, the Special Committee of 24, the International Trusteeship system, the Trusteeship Council, maps of the world in 1945 and today, and press releases on United Nations activities relating to decolonization. A random sample indicates that the web site receives approximately 50 hits per day. French and Spanish versions of the page are being prepared and should be available by July 2000. A web page on Western Sahara is maintained and updated by the Department and can be found in the peacekeeping

section under "Peace and Security" on the United Nations home page.

IV. Publications

15. Each of the issues of the *UN Chronicle*, a quarterly magazine of the United Nations, published during the reporting period featured an article relating to decolonization. In issue No. 2 (1999), an article was published on the establishment by the Security Council of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) to organize and conduct a "popular consultation" to determine the Territory's status. In issue No. 3 (1999), there was coverage of the consultation in East Timor as well as coverage of the aftermath of the violence there and the worsening humanitarian situation. Issue No. 3 (1999) also carried an interview with Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia, which focused in large part on the role of the United Nations in helping Namibia achieve independence. Issue No. 4 (1999) covered the acceptance by Indonesia's national assembly of the popular consultation and the establishment of the United Nations peacekeeping force, United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET). A summary of the work of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly during its fifty-fourth session, which included a section on decolonization, was published in issue No. 1 (2000), along with continuing coverage of the activities of UNTAET.

16. During the reporting period, a comprehensive account of decolonization issues for the year 1997 was prepared for publication in the regular edition of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*. The last remaining backlog edition, covering 1990, which was published in 1999, contained 39 pages on the subject of decolonization. The 1998 edition (currently under preparation) will also contain comprehensive coverage of decolonization issues.

V. Radio

17. The Radio Service of the Department continued to cover various aspects of decolonization and related issues in its news bulletins and current affairs magazines in all six official languages and in some non-official languages. Among other items on decolonization, the radio news programmes carried reports on the work of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly and of the Special Committee, the questions of Western Sahara and Puerto Rico, the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the issues of small Territories, the adoption of the report of the regional seminar in Saint Lucia, the ongoing efforts to bring a speedy end to all forms of colonialism, the various issues pertaining to the situation in the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, including the seven in the Caribbean, the amendment to the decolonization resolutions to make them more relevant to the needs of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Special Committee's appeal to the administering Powers to cooperate or continue to cooperate with the United Nations by receiving United Nations visiting missions in the Territories under their administration, and the achievements of the United Nations in the field of decolonization.

18. During the reporting period, the question of East Timor was covered extensively in radio news programmes as well as radio magazine and feature programmes in various languages for regional and worldwide dissemination. Some of the topics included developments leading up to the ballot, the voting registration process, the outbreak of violence, establishment of UNAMET in June 1999, authorization by the Security Council for the multinational force (INTERFET), the voting in large numbers by East Timorese people despite intimidation and violence, an interview with Ms. Cairn Perelli, Director of the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, a campaign of violence by pre-integration militias following the announcement of the election result, a large-scale emergency humanitarian effort, establishment of UNTAET, the transition process to independence, deployment of personnel and setting up the headquarters of UNTAET in Dili, the International Commission of Inquiry on East Timor concerning human rights violations and the Secretary-General's visit to East Timor in February 2000.

19. In addition, the Service produced 10 regional magazines and five feature programmes on the question of Western Sahara and East Timor in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, French-Creole, Russian, Spanish and Turkish.

VI. Television/video

20. Activities within the United Nations system relating to decolonization continued to be televised and disseminated through feeds and dubs made available to networks and other television stations and through packages of television news and video highlights provided to news syndicates. The Audio/Visual Library continued to make tapes and cassettes available to correspondents, delegates, and United Nations radio producers and outside producers on decolonization issues.

21. East Timor was featured in the following "UN in Action" television programmes produced during the reporting period: a CNN World Report on "Elections in East Timor" (August 1999), programme No. 682, "The International Organization for Migration (IOM) helps East Timorese to return home" (May 2000), and programme No. 690, "The changing role of United Nations peacekeepers in East Timor" (June 2000). "UN in Action" is a three-minute video programme, highlighting a different aspect of the work of the United Nations each week. It is produced in the six official languages and is broadcast on television stations and networks around the world, including CNN.

VII. United Nations information centres

22. During the reporting period, East Timor was the all-dominating decolonization issue, and the global network of United Nations information centres (UNICs), services (UNISs) and United Nations Offices employed their full range of information tools to keep the public well informed about developments relating to East Timor and other Non-Self-Governing Territories.

23. Following are examples of activities promoting awareness of decolonization issues from around the world. UNIC Bonn's translation into German of the Secretary-General's statement on East Timor (SG/SM/7127) was used by all major media in Germany. UNIC Moscow produced six press releases in Russian, and UNIC Tunis produced and disseminated a collection of documents and resolutions about East Timor. UNIS Bangkok did five radio interviews during a donor meeting for the rebuilding of East Timor, while UNIC Buenos Aires used a radio programme to refute allegations that the United Nations had been passive in the face of violations of human rights following the referendum on East Timor. UNIC London participated in interviews on five radio and two TV programmes. UNIC Rio de Janeiro cooperated in the production of a 45-minute TV programme on UNTAET, and UNIC Islamabad participated in a current affairs programme. UNIC Rome used interviews in 10 radio and four TV programmes to generate a better understanding of developments in East Timor.

24. Many UNICs arranged briefings and debates, gave speeches and lectures, prepared articles and responded to criticism and in general devoted considerable efforts to the East Timor issue. This was particularly true for UNICs Jakarta, Lisbon and Sydney. UNIC Jakarta, for example, organized a press conference on voter registration; UNIC Lisbon produced a public service announcement "Your vote is secret" for television and, UNIC Sydney set up an interview with the Secretary-General

25. Although East Timor was the dominating issue, some UNICs also focused on decolonization in general. UNIC Copenhagen contributed to the production of a textbook in Danish on decolonization, and UNIC Ouagadougou spoke on the issue at several high schools. UNIC Sana'a translated into Arabic and disseminated press releases related to the work of the Special Committee, and UNIC Tunis produced a compilation of reports, documents and resolutions pertaining to Western Sahara. Both current and historic information material about decolonization is available to the public in the reference libraries maintained by all UNICs, and the more recent material is posted on the web sites established in local languages by 30 UNICs.

VIII. Non-governmental organizations and public inquiries

26. The Department continued to disseminate information on decolonization through briefings for

non-governmental organizations and guided tours for visitors to Headquarters, and by responding to inquiries from the public. On 17 February 2000 the Department organized a briefing for non-governmental organizations, "Update on East Timor". A political affairs officer from the Department of Political Affairs briefed approximately 200 non-governmental organization representatives, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations and a representative of the International Federation for East Timor.

27. The guided tour route at United Nations Headquarters includes a visit to the Trusteeship Council Chamber, where the role of the United Nations in the process of decolonization is explained. From June 1999 through April 2000, 372,243 visitors took the tour. Also in 1999, the exhibit on decolonization, which is located on the tour route, was significantly revamped and updated. The Public Inquiries Unit responded to 109 inquiries on questions relating to decolonization during the reporting period.

United Nations A/AC.109/2000/20

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 July 2000

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Resolution adopted by the Special Committee at its 5th meeting, on 5 July 2000

Dissemination of information on decolonization

The Special Committee,

Having examined questions relating to the dissemination of information on decolonization,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and other resolutions and decisions of the United Nations concerning the dissemination of information on decolonization, in particular General Assembly resolution 54/92 of 6 December 1999,

Recognizing the need for flexible, practical and innovative approaches towards reviewing the options of self-determination for the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories with a view to achieving complete decolonization by the year 2000,

Reiterating the importance of dissemination of information as an instrument for furthering the aims of the Declaration, and mindful of the role of world public opinion in effectively assisting the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve self-determination,

Recognizing the role played by the administering Powers in transmitting information to the Secretary-General in accordance with the terms of Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations,

Aware of the role of non-governmental organizations in the dissemination of information on decolonization,

1. *Approves* the activities in the field of dissemination of information on decolonization undertaken by the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat;

2. *Considers it important* to continue its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis

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on the options of self-determination available for the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories;

3. *Requests* the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information to take into account the suggestions of the Special Committee to continue their efforts to take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization and, *inter alia*:

(a) To continue to collect, prepare and disseminate, particularly to the Territories, basic material on the issue of self-determination of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories;

(b) To seek the full cooperation of the administering Powers in the discharge of the tasks referred to above;

(c) To maintain a working relationship with the appropriate regional and intergovernmental organizations, particularly in the Pacific and Caribbean regions, by holding periodic consultations and exchanging information;

(d) To encourage the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the dissemination of information on decolonization;

(e) To report to the Special Committee on measures taken in the implementation of the present resolution;

4. *Requests* all States, including the administering Powers, to continue to extend their cooperation in the dissemination of information referred to in paragraph 2 above.

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General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 July 2000

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Resolution adopted by the Special Committee at its 5th meeting, on 5 July 2000

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations

The Special Committee,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 1970 (XVIII) of 16 December 1963, in which the Assembly requested the Special Committee to study the information transmitted to the Secretary-General in accordance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations and to take such information fully into account in examining the situation with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, contained in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 54/83 of 6 December 1999, in which the Assembly requested the Special Committee to continue to discharge the functions entrusted to it under resolution 1970 (XVIII),

Stressing the importance of timely transmission by the administering Powers of adequate information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter, in particular in relation to the preparation by the Secretariat of the working papers on the Territories concerned,

1. *Reaffirms* that, in the absence of a decision by the General Assembly itself that a Non-Self-Governing Territory has attained a full measure of self-government in terms of Chapter XI of the Charter, the administering Power concerned should continue to transmit information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter with respect to that Territory;

2. *Requests* the administering Powers concerned to transmit or continue to transmit to the Secretary-General the information prescribed in Article 73 *e* of the Charter, as well as the fullest possible information on political and constitutional developments in the Territories concerned, within a maximum period of six months following the expiration of the administrative year in those Territories;

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3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that adequate information is drawn from all available published sources in connection with the preparation of the working papers relating to the Territories concerned;

4. *Decides*, subject to any decision that the General Assembly may take in that connection, to continue to discharge the functions entrusted to it under Assembly resolution 1970 (XVIII), in accordance with established procedures.

United Nations A/AC.109/2000/22

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 July 2000

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Resolution adopted by the Special Committee at its 5th meeting, on 5 July 2000

Question of sending visiting missions to Territories

The Special Committee,

Having considered the question of sending visiting missions to Territories,

Recalling the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee requesting the administering Powers to cooperate fully with the United Nations by receiving visiting missions in the Territories under their administration,

Mindful that United Nations visiting missions provide an effective means of assessing the situation in those Territories and of ascertaining the wishes and aspirations of the peoples thereof regarding their future status,

Conscious that United Nations visiting missions enhance the capacity of the United Nations to assist the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories in attaining the objectives set forth in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, contained in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, and in other relevant resolutions of the Assembly,

Noting with appreciation the continuing exemplary cooperation of New Zealand, as an administering Power, in the work of the Special Committee, and that, at the invitation of the Government of New Zealand, a visiting mission was dispatched to Tokelau in July 1994,[1]

Recalling the dispatch in 1979 of a United Nations visiting mission to the Territory of Guam, noting the recommendation of the 1996 Pacific Regional Seminar that a visiting mission be sent to Guam, and taking note of resolution No. 464 (LS), adopted by the twenty-third Guam legislature on 19 July 1996, in which it requested the dispatch of a United Nations visiting mission to that Territory,

[1] See A/AC.109/2009.

00-51619 (E)

Welcoming the commencement of informal dialogue between the Special Committee and some administering Powers,

1. *Stresses* the need to dispatch periodic visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to facilitate the full, speedy and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples with respect to those Territories;

2. *Calls upon* the administering Powers to cooperate or continue to cooperate with the United Nations by receiving United Nations visiting missions in the Territories under their administration;

3. *Requests* the administering Powers to consider new approaches in the work of the Special Committee, and calls upon them to cooperate with the Special Committee in its efforts;

4. *Requests* its Chairman to continue consultations with the administering Powers concerned on the implementation of paragraph 2 of the present resolution and to report thereon to the Special Committee as appropriate;

5. *Also requests* its Chairman to enter into consultations with the administering Power of Guam with a view to facilitating the dispatch of a United Nations visiting mission to that Territory.